

DRAFT JULY 20, 2020

Minneapolis Charter Commission

Compilation of Public Comments

COMMENTS IN SUPPORT OF PLACING AMENDMENT ON NOVEMBER BALLOT

***NOTE:** The large majority of the comments in support of the amendment simply urge us not to delay the process and, instead, to take timely action to ensure that the voters have an opportunity to exercise their right to vote on it. There was relatively little comment about the substance of the amendment; rather, the concern was simply that reform of the police department is urgent, the ballot question is the democratic way, we cannot afford to wait a year, and that the amendment is the way to start the conversation about p.*

1. Shifting of supervisory power to the City Council

The amendment will increase the City Council's freedom to move to a new model.

2. Creation of New Department

While there are problems with the vagueness of the amendment and with the Council's lack of coordination with others who have been researching this topic for years, the amendment moves us in the right direction.

Systemic change must start with the Charter amendment.

Change will not be immediate; the new model will be "thoughtful and strategic."

This is an opportunity to be at the forefront of visionary models of public safety.

This is an opportunity to build something entirely new.

Four mayors have pledged reform; police chiefs the same. Twenty five years of promises have not been kept. Incremental change is failing, and the result has been trauma and death. Make room to reimagine with the community.

I look forward to "a future of reconciliation, healing and a community-led response to public safety."

Delighted to see focus on public health. Public health initiatives are often overlooked and can achieve long term effects. We still need police officers, too, though. But this idea is promising.

3. Position of Chief of Police

[No comments refer to the Police Chief.]

4. **Hiring of or numbers of licensed law enforcement officers at the discretion of the City Council**

We must eliminate the police all together.

People are sick and tired of the abuse of power by the police department. Over and over the MPD has shown itself to be un-reformable and unaccountable. Do not delay change.

The MPD will not be dismantled overnight. There will be a thoughtful transition.

Disbanding has proven to be successful in places like Camden, New Jersey.

A restructuring will permit the police to concentrate on the real crime work for which they are trained.

5. **Fears for Safety**

The MPD has failed to keep all members of our community safe. Help our community move to new methods of community safety.

The current system has failed. We need a different structure for the safety of all.

Children deserve to live where they can feel safe and valued.

The police have abandoned us.

6. **“Good cops/bad cops”**

[No comments on this theme.]

7. **The Process**

George Floyd’s murder was the last straw. A “yes” vote will allow serious conversations to occur.

The ballot fast tracks a public and democratic process, which is key. The new concept of Community Safety is also key.

The counterpoint to the concern the process is too rushed is the opposite, that speed is vitally important when the spotlight is on Minneapolis for awful racial disparities and other such issues. We really do have time: it is four months to November.

Despite lots of questions, people should vote “yes.”

Apparently, we are finally ready to act/ready for historic change. “Defend black life!”

The people of Minneapolis should have the ability to influence how we are policed.

The amendment will allow the one year process to take place.

We cannot wait a year. A delay will lead to collective uncertainty and unrest.

Getting the amendment on the November ballot is urgent because the turnout for the 2020 election will be high. It is a golden opportunity because the community is engaged.

If we cannot vote in November, it will be a “discouraging signal” that “once again, Minneapolis is unwilling to grapple with a tough problem.”

“All eyes are on us.”

We have a right to have a say. We deserve the opportunity to vote. “I am ready to vote.”

8. The Need for Charter change to facilitate reform

Dissatisfaction with the MPD is loud and clear.

The MPD is unreformable. Past reform efforts have not worked.

The amendment offers flexibility.

The amendment is “weak soup” but is essential. Reforms in the past year have changed nothing.

Changing the Charter would not necessarily require dismantling the police department or demoting the Police Chief. It would simply provide needed flexibility to reform the department.

Maybe this amendment will make Minneapolis “the haven of diversity it aspires to be.”

This is the first step in the process. We need to redirect resources to public housing, social services, etc. The city needs to understand the root causes of crime.

A delay in placing the question on the ballot would constitute a pocket veto by an unelected body, not consistent with the Charter Commission’s values of good governance.

Respect the City Council’s “unanimous” vote.

“For too long, the city Charter has prohibited public oversight over the MPD and blocked commonsense solutions for community safety.”

9. Suggested Substitute Amendments

You should endorse the 2018 proposal.

You should work with MPD150 or other such groups to draft better language.

10. Other Suggestions

American Indian Movement could be in charge of security for the city.

We need stronger language.

The experience requirement for the new director should be better defined, including a mission and goals.

**COMMENTS IN OPPOSITION TO PLACING AMENDMENT ON NOVEMBER
BALLOT**

NOTE: *Comments in opposition to Amendment are universally in favor of reform and see it as urgent, but, at the same time, are not in favor of the proposed Amendment.*

Four major themes are: (1) the lack of detail or plan and consequently the concern about an uninformed vote or being left in a vacuum; (2) the better alternative is to have the year-long process before a vote; (3) the fear of the consequences of a lack of police protection; and (4) the lack of opportunity for community input to date. People also expressed support for Chief Arradondo and for giving him a chance to lead a reform process and expressed skepticism about the shifting of power to the City Council.

1. Shifting of supervisory power to the City Council

“Fourteen bosses are too many” and diminishes and muddles, not increases accountability and transparency.

Diffused oversight can be no oversight.

Accountability is assumed and cannot be trusted; there is precedent to demonstrate why.

I can only vote out of office one of the fourteen.

This is a blank check to the City Council.

City leaders should be working together.

“Such an amendment will not make city leaders better leaders....”

Violates separation of powers which is one of the foundations of our democracy.

The City Council has done little to address structural racism in the past; why should we believe it will do so now?

The City Council has deprived city residents of input.

Do not weaken the Mayor. (Note: this was a focus of no more than a small handful of comments.)

Give the Mayor more power, not less.

The Charter is not a barrier, but, rather, it is a guarantee against arbitrary City Council actions.

Minneapolis knows what we do not want, but not what we do want. The amendment does not accomplish what we do not want. Please separate the two components.

The non-responses to the Charter Commission during the July 8 meeting show that the City Council needs a “thoughtful rebuke.”

2. Creation of New Department

Not well thought out; the details are unclear, vague or nonexistent, and there is no plan we can review before voting, no goals or data analysis. When asked repeatedly, “Where is this process going?”, the amendment sponsors replied, “We will find the answer later.”

I understand that details do not go into the Charter, “but color needs to be given to the rationale.”

“It fails the basic measures of good government: it lacks both specifics and accountability.” According to the Question and Answer section on the City’s website, the City Council conducted no legal, no fiscal impact nor a racial equity analysis.

I am against being forced to make an uninformed vote.

There is no budget attached so that we might know the cost.

This whole process is too rushed, the changes too broad and sweeping without adequate study, first.

We shouldn’t be held hostage to an unclear vision.

It makes more sense to have the “year-long” process, first, and then something to vote for.

The City could be making incremental changes while larger structural change is still in the planning stages.

There are far too many factors that contribute to racism in this city. Drug addiction, for instance, is a big problem, and there is no plan to eliminate it.

It does not address the root causes of racism.

The job description for the new Director of the Department contains too much detail for a charter provision. It should not be so inflexible; things could change.

3. **Position of Chief of Police**

We support our current Chief and want to give him an opportunity to lead reform.

If there is an appointment for a new position, it will not be a public process as it has been under the current Charter and therefore less accountability.

All officers should have to reapply for their positions.

4. **Hiring of or number of licensed law enforcement officers at the whim of the City Council**

Impact of labor laws not considered.

Defunding does not necessarily mean reform.

There is no commitment to any law enforcement. The language leaves room for zero licensed officers.

There is no plan to replace the current police department.

The Charter provision referring to lawful power of police officers is deleted, and there is nothing in the new text defining what “lawful power” the new “licensed peace officers” may exercise.

The word “may” leads to lack of stability.

:A disproportionately white population of folks who do not live in North Minneapolis (and never would) and non-Northsiders are behind dismantling the police.”

CAHOOTS is a great model, but 80 percent of the department is still police officers. Partnership *with* police officers is essential to the model.

5. **Fears for Safety**

This Amendment is dangerous.

It is not only clear if a non-police officer response is enough. For example, domestic violence calls and mental health crises are often not controlled and safe.

Yes, we have been subject to the abuses of police, but we need their protection, too.

I do not see how the new structure will help.

Defund but do not abolish.

Crime is on the rise; the solution is new forms of policing, not defunding.

The Amendment will cause businesses and residents to move out of the City.
Convention business will be lost.

Crime will be on the increase, as it has in recent weeks.

The Charter change will empower/embolden criminals.

Police need more funding, not less, because we do not have enough police officers.
(Some commented on calls to 911 going unanswered, particularly in North Minneapolis.)

We are living in fear.

“We are not an experiment.”

“We’re not guinea pigs in a social experiment.”

“Where is the evidence that this decision is likely to lead to less violent crime?”

Though change is long overdue, experimenting with public safety is dangerous, and the most vulnerable will bear the brunt.

6. **“Good cops/bad cops”**

They just need better training and discipline.

We should support our good police officers.

We need police, but we need better police.

A few bad police officers do not mean the whole department is bad.

We should not fix the problem by creating another one.

We just need to take power from the Police Federation/arbitrators.

Just limit the power of the police union and eliminate qualified immunity. In other words, we need a better police force, but not a vacuum.

7. **The Process**

The City Council’s drafting process was shrouded in secrecy and bypassed community input.

Don’t reward the lack of due diligence.

A short time line is a “bad way to make good public policy,” especially when public engagement is more difficult during summer months, generally, and now during the COVID crisis.

Remember the law of unintended consequences.

The City Council short circuited its usual and appropriate processes to expedite the amendment, thus short circuiting opportunity to the public for input before the amendment was essentially carved in stone.

There was a failure to seek community input, particularly from the black community. It is just a change of name; it retains the police federation.

The City Council has used words like “defund,” “abolish,” and “dismantle” and then backs off and says they do not really mean that, leaving unclear what they do mean.

This is all rhetoric without substance; it is confusing.

Saying “trust us, we’ll figure it out later” is unacceptable.

The Amendment is poorly written.

The Amendment is premature.

There have been too many rash decisions lately.

The Amendment causes the City to remain splintered instead of bringing us together to effect deep and sustainable change.

Rushing the process means that long term consequences cannot be thought through. Drastic change not thought through first can have unintended consequences.

The process is opportunistic, a “cheap reelection gimmick,” a “kneejerk reaction.”

The City Council has not earned our trust. For example: the 2020 Plan.

There is no guarantee the City Council and Mayor will not just return to business as usual; this is just a name change and creates a more convoluted structure.

Needed are goals and methods for measuring success, as part of a longer process. Need evaluation before moving to ballot.

The City Council should listen to the community for a year, first, before acting.

The City Council should also listen to experts during that year.

“Please don’t continue a legacy of making decisions for black and brown people without seeking their input.”

The whole point of charter change is not to do so without strong support. In this case, the Mayor, City Council and the City are split, so the strong support is missing.

8. **No Need for Charter change to facilitate reform**

Reform can occur without changing the Charter.

The amendment has no actual reforms.

The City can just add the new department and funding for the public health related reforms without touching the Charter.

Implement the reforms already proposed by Attorney General Ellison's task force or other groups.

The City Council could have made change, already, within the current system, and without compromising public safety.

9. **Suggested Substitute Amendments**

Add a charter provision that prohibits guns .

Defund the mayor and city council and replace with a city manager.

10. **Other Suggestions**

Form a task force representing the Mayor, City Council and community. Have weekly press conferences to discuss steps taken that week.

There should be community control of the police department and involvement of community groups such as CAIR and CUAPB.

Outsource police function to the county or a different police department. For instance, St. Paul Police Department would have to hire more officers but could hire just the good ones. No more outrageous settlements.

The amendment doesn't correlate with what we want: abolition.